

Sable

by Monical

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> Written By Monica Kactz<p>

A silver new moon rose high into the sky as a figure crept across the roof of Gotham's Electric center, but it's feeble light was veiled by the thick mist that settled with the coming of the night. On the street far below, dim circles of light clung to the street lanterns. But where she trod, all was darkness. The room that she sought was only two floors down from the roof, a convenience to make her infrequent visits with discretion.

Indeed, her slender figure was barely discernible against the dark sky. The pale skin of her face had been covered with a black mask and smudged with dark ointment, and she wore a garb undistinguishable from a regular lurker; black, leather pants that emphasized the curves of her legs, and a top as dark as her pants that clung fiercely to her body, also showing off the sharp curves and hollows of her build. It was an indistinct dark hue color that seemed to absorb the shadow. In the mistladen air, her chestnut mane clung to her head in damp tendrils, and her only ornament was a silver belt that wound around her waist.

She took a rope from her pack and affixed one end firmly to the nearest pole. She crept to the roof's edge and counted carefully down the rope's knotted length. Holding the rope firmly, she backed up, took a few running steps and flung herself as far out into the darkness as she could.

As she dropped, she braced herself, accepted the jolting tug that

came when the rope snapped taut. Then she swung like a pendulum toward the air vent, shifting her weight a bit to adjust her course. At the last possible moment, she pulled up into a tight tuck.

The agile lurker cleared the vent. In one smooth move she released the rope and pulled into the vent, and crawled several feet toward her exit. When she was sure all was quiet, she opened the vent and landed on the floor in a crouch. The narrow glowing slits that were her eyes swept the room, checking for danger. Satisfied that all was well, she stood and approached the main keyboard panel.

The amount of buttons and levers were uncountable, and the shadow dweller's eyes searched for the correct one. That was until she heard a click of a door sliding open behind her. In a flash, she dived into the most shadow filled section of the room, her thin body pressing against the assembly of boxes, trying to make herself thinner than she already was; almost invisible. Then, she listened.

The squeaking of shiny shoes against the tiled floor indicated someone was coming. Two sets of footsteps followed, and the quivering of a flashlight sweeping the room. "Nothin' here" grunted the overweight nightwatch men with a yawn. "C'mon Joe.. let's get on moving"

"No" Joe shook his head. "I swear I heard something"

"Just you're imagination"

The young woman in black inched more towards the wall as the flashlight flecked past where she had once been. Then, once more, dodged the light with one quick movement, escaping it narrowly in a grace that silence would envy.

"See?" Bob grinned between his yawn. "Nothing" he then turned his attention away from his partner just to glance at the large windows at the side office, leaving Joe enveloped in the more darker part of the room, his knees quivering.

Nervously Joe swallowed, his eyes scanning the area for any movement, his ears straining for any sound. The silence was unbearable and his own shallow breathing began to taunt him. Only the sudden sound of a heeled boot stepping up behind him did moisture bursts from his forehead. He dared not look, and he dared not scream... this shadow ran more than shivers up his spine, it seemed to absorb his fear.

Then, with a strong swipe, a gloved hand cupped over his mouth, while another arm wound around his waist and drawn him backwards, the shadows swallowing him whole. His muffled cries made his fat partner whirl.

"Joe?"

Silence was the only response.

Sunlight poured into the room like a sweet peach aroma, absorbing all shadow, and swallowing the rest of the night. It was a bright, sunny, and warm Saturday morning in Gotham, rare occasion in this mistladen

city. Birds were singing, pigeons were cooing, and the usual sound of traffic sounded below the city's enormous, futuristic buildings.

Terry tossed to one side, turning his back to the window where the warm, sun's rays hugged his body and soothed his aches. He was oblivious to their intentions, however, and got up, irritably pulled down the blinds before crawling back tiredly into bed. His moment's peace was not to last.

The door creaked open, and Matt poked his head through, entering on tippy toe, with the stealth of a wolf, the wit of a cat... and speed of a...

"Get lost twip..."

"But it's time to get up..." The youth persisted, innocently hiding a water pistol behind his back.

"I don't care" his brother moaned. "I had a long night..."

"Mom's gonna yell..." Matt pressed in a persuasive tone.

"I said get lost..." Terry retorted, tossing back around to the other side, while in the same action, pulled both covers and pillows over his head. "I'm half-asleep" his voice was muffled under the layers of blanket and pillow.

Matt frowned, pulling out his watergun and looking thoughtfully at it. Suddenly, a mischievous look flicked across his features, as he took to a firing position. "Freeze, your under arrest." he aimed at the covers. "Come out with your hands up..."

"Matt..." his older brother's tone turned more dangerous. "I'm warning you..."

"FIRE!" He only wanted to pretend he pulled the water gun's trigger. Apparently, it was very much reality when his finger slipped and actually pressed it. In an instant, a cold, thin stream of water burst from the toy's front sight., wetting the cushions and soaking through to Terry.

"That's it twip!" Terry burst out from under the covers. "You're gonna get it."

"Ahh..." the boy let out a high pitched squeak, before whirling to run. "I thought it was empty, honest!"

"That's not the only thing that empty" Terry growled, bounding right after him.

Matt was a usual trouble maker, that was for certain. His life seemed to revolve around making Terry's life more of a challenge that it already was. Terry loved that kid, he was after all his brother, but sometimes the boy got totally out of control and did something he always regretted later.

All it was that Matt actually wanted was attention. Since their father's death, Terry and Matt had grown closer then they were before, but even with that much to be happy about, no one really paid

attention to him. Mary, their mother, had errands to run, keep the house under order and keep their lives happy while wrecking her own with stress. Terry had school to keep up with, and at the same time, work for Mr. Wayne to support their family. No one had time to think of poor Matt.

"Morning boys" Mary McGinnis greeted her boys as they emerged into the sunlit kitchen one after the other. Matt zipped out of Terry's reach, and hid behind his mother.

"Hey mom" he looked up at her, before making a face at his older brother. Terry returned the favor with a threatening look.

"Breakfast is on the table." Mary looked over at her eldest son. "Terry?"

"Oh... thanks mom" the teen nodded in approval at the plate full. A lovely breakfast consisting of eggs, ham and toast, it was rather typical. Really. Reaching for the remote, Terry flicked on the television, before taking a forkfull of eggs.

"-And Gotham is recovering well from last night's mysterious power failure. After questioning two nightwatchmen who were on duty at Gotham's power central, the cause was apparently the result of some late night prowling from a mysterious shadow." the blue figure of a new anchor woman turned to her partner. "Steve?"

"Bo-ring.." Matt sighed, fiddling around with his plate full.

"The blackout has yet one more enigma to solve. Kain Berkway, our infamous Gotham jewlthief was found dead this morning, in addition to two other criminals, who suffered a similar fate. Police are looking into this mysterious turn of events."

"Hmm.." Terry murmured thoughtfully. "That's weird"

Mary could only smile at her son. He was seventeen, a dangerous age to be in this century, yet he had proved many times that he could act like an adult. Even if he did have trouble with his temper a few months before, he seemed to have calmed down. His father's death, he didn't take lightly, and was doing his fair share in their struggles, sometimes even more than his fair share.

Terry working for Mr. Wayne was perhaps the best thing that every happened. Terry seemed more... disciplined, if possible and had more control over his actions. In addition to the fact that Mr. Wayne was almost like a father figure to the teen, it was atleast some sort of comfort to one of her boys.

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 " I didn't know you had such an interest for news, Terry"

He looked up from his breakfast plate. "Yeah well" he swallowed his food. "it's good to keep up with what's going on in the world"

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"The security camera had managed to catch our mystery guest at the Gotham Power Central just before it blackout."- the television screen showed a screencapture of a masked female, dressed in a sleek, black suit, fingerless gloves and a red and black cape frozen in air as if she was tossing it aside. Her face was only half covered with the

mask, auburn mane that was partially tied up in a loose topsy topped over her shoulders.-" Judging from the screenshot, police say that our shadowdweller is about 5ft8, 125lbs and female. Her handiwork with computers demonstrates her hacking skills, and stealth abilities. Police had no trouble with this newcomer in the past, and believe that the trail of criminal deaths she has left behind points to a new sense of justice. Now the question remains, what side is she really on?"

Well, that certainly put a new swing in things. Terry had the sudden notion that perhaps Bruce would like to have a look at this. Terry suddenly regretted that he didn't tape the informative. Then again, his mother would have found it quite suspicious if he did.

He flicked off the television with a yawn. "Well, I better get moving." Terry got up, moving into his room for his clothes. "I have to get over to Mr. Wayne's for an early start."

"Why so early?" Mary raised an eyebrow at her son's sudden eagerness to get to work.

Terry emerged from his room and stopped outright. "Uhh.." he kicked his brain into high gear for an excuse. "He needed me to run an errand for him before he gets over to the office" He pulled on his jacket and reached for the car keys.

"Terry..." Mary shook her head. "I admit you have been working hard for Mr. Wayne, but make sure it doesn't overshadow the more important things?" she kissed him on the cheek.

Terry grinned. "Sure thing mom"

Mary smiled. "Your father would be proud"

"Yeah" Terry nodded sadly, turning to leave. "He would be..."

The sound of footsteps against the cave floor shattered the usual quiet aura that surrounded the batcave. Ace perked his ears, and raised his head from his paws. It was Terry. Wagging his tale, the dog trotted up to the teen, and greeted him happily.

"Hey Boy" Terry smiled down at the dog, kneeling to his eye level. He ruffled the dog's fur playful, and laughed when Ace returned the greeting with a wet kiss.

"You're early"

Terry looked up. Sitting in his usual spot, the old man settled down in a miserable looking, leather arm chair. Bruce insisted that it was comfortable, and it must have been, otherwise he wouldn't be able to sit for no more then ten minutes in that seat, let alone hours. Then again, Bruce was used to pain.

"Surprise" The boy smirked dryly, and approached the old man."Tell me, do you actually sit in here all day infront of that screen?" he indicated the batcomputer's massive monitor, about 15 feet in width and 10 feet in height.

"Pretty much" the elder retorted, returning the dry smile with a slight curve of lip. "Good thing you're here"

"Hey, it's okay" Terry shrugged, increasing the sarcasm in his voice. "It's not like I have anything to do on a Saturday morning"

Bruce, seeing the irony as clear as a crystal, decided not to answer that. Instead, whirled his chair around to face the batcomputer, and punched in various keys on the enormous keyboard. The amount of buttons and switches the computer had was uncountable. It made Terry dizzy just trying to count them all.

"I'm guessing you heard what happened last night?"

"Yep" Terry jammed his hands into the pockets of his jeans. "The horrors of not having electricity"

"Indeed" a flicker of wry amusement crossed Bruce's features. "The police are blaming her.."

For the second time that day, Terry looked up at the screenshot displayed on Batcomputer's screen, and could almost call it home. Those glowing slits behind that mask, those loose tendrils of auburn falling elegantly over her shoulder and her lithe figure clothe in a dark hue of tights. It was reassuring, in a way, that someone knew how it felt to live a double life.

"Yeah, I heard." Terry looked up at her thoughtfully. "Who is she?"

"I don't know" the elder said carelessly. "apparently she must have used the blackout as a cover for her murders"

"You think she did it?"

"I'm just assuming, for now. It's rather suspicious, though" he punched in a couple of keys, and the images on the screen were replaced by three others; profile pictures. One was an dopey looking criminal; orange hair and freckles, another had dangerous hazel eyes and a sly grin, while the third had a long, pointed nose and a crooked jaw. "That she would kill three men with serious police records. Any idea why?"

"Nope... But I'm guessing you might"

"I don't know exactly why..." Bruce said, looking up at the screen, while absently massaging his chin between his finger and thumb. "... but they must be connected somehow. I doubt our mystery guest would just choose at random"

"Alright." Terry said leaning against Bruce's chair. "Where do we start?"

"You heard about Judge Seaver's murder, no doubt" Bruce whirled around on the chair, causing Terry to step back.

"Yep. Funeral was yesterday, right?" Terry recalled, watching as his mentor reached for his cane, and got up stiffly. He followed.

Bruce, with the help of his walking stick, approached a table in the far of the cave. There were several odds and ends on the table; a few flasks, fingerprint samples and what looked like a chemistry set. There were also a few papers scattered about it. He picked up the newsprint, and gave it to Terry to examine "All these deaths tie in with the Judge's murder. These three were of the few criminals that he had sentenced to Arkham for a couple of years"

Terry looked the paper over and handed it back to his mentor. "What you're saying is, she's after everyone who Judge Seaver sentenced to jail?" It roughly made sense, that is, if this mysterious figure was planning on killing off all the criminals in the city.

"It's a start. But there's a line that narrows it down a little"

"Yeah" Terry muttered. "by half of Arkham's population"
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 "No" Bruce couldn't help by produce a small smile. "The three that were killed were also the prime suspects of Judge Seaver's murder" He walked back to the computer to sit down. He brought up yet another screen, displaying two more men's profiles. "There are two more suspects still alive; James Hudson and Mark Berkly"

"Hmm.. Which one do you think is next on her list?"

Bruce cracked a smile, privately. He knew Terry was eager to put on the costume and jump into action. Unfortunately for the youth, that wasn't how things were done. The elder only shrugged. "That's anybody's guess"

"Oh that helps..."
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"Really honey" James Hudson pressed closer to his girl's ear. "I could give you the world if you'd like..." The ebony hair female could only giggle at his hot breath whisped around her ear. She snuggled closer to him.

"You can't give her what you don't have, Hudson..." a voice tore through the romantic air like a bullet. In an instant, the whole lovey-dovey scene evaporated. "By the way, did you happen to mention the price?"

The two of them gasped in union, and looked up. Half concealed by the shadows and halfway into the night, the vague outline of a figure stood out from the night. The lithe figure and female voice were the obvious clues that the shadow lurker was a woman. Smiling behind her mask, she took a step foreword, revealing herself.

The brunette only frowned. "James" she tugged at his sleeve nervously. "Who is she?"

"Beats me" Hudson shared her nausea, and pressed his back against the couch as the figure took another step foreword. Obviously, this masked intruder was having sheer pleasure feeding of their fear.

"Well then.." the girl turned to look at her sternly, a sudden spark

of courage surging through her body. "I suggest that this kinky chick dressed in black tights leave... otherwise..."

"Kinky chick?" The mysterious woman smirked, before adding disgruntled. "Take off, sister..."

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 The girl's reaction would never escape her. The masked figure immediately took her facial expression to long term memory as an unforgettable moment. The brunette drew back, hiding cowardly behind her 'hunny'. Unfortunately, her man wasn't much comfort. He was quaking himself, his entire body shaking from fear, to which she also stored in her memory.

Hudson, obviously swallowing his fear, gathered what he had left of his criminal pride. "What are you? Batman's girlfriend?"

> Aren't you a little late for Halloween, sweetie?"<p>

The comment stung her. "The name's Sable, if you're curious" she started coolly. "I'm not Batman's girlfriend, and I'm not your sweetie" she tensed her muscles, reading herself for quick movement. "Oh, and for the record... Trick or Treat" She threw a punch at the unsuspecting James, causing him to topple over backwards, sofa and all.

Blood had trickled from the corner of his mouth. James noticed it when he rubbed his sore jaw with a blunt hand. Examining the sudden mark of crimson, he looked up at her with a daggered glare. "You'll pay for that.... BOYS!"

Immediately, seven.. no.. eight... too many to count in little time, thugs burst into the room, a few with guns, two with clubs and the rest with bare fists. Sable readied herself for the coming battle. "Love these odds..." she commented, when she avoided a swing of a club.

The first thug approached her, club in hand and tried his luck. He narrowly missed her, as she did a flip in mid air, knocking the club out of his hands with a kick, and knocking him unconscious seconds later with a well placed punch. Unfortunately, she wasn't watching from behind. A bone crunching blow to her back brought her down to her knees. She had no time to recover, because the second thug with a heavy club, brought his weapon down, inches away from her head.

Neatly, she rolled to one hip, and got up before she could get nailed by another thug from behind. The odds were unfair suddenly, for Sable had the sudden notion that her hands were full. Thinking fast, her brain only allowed her to produce a cartwheel out of the way of a punch, and a kick to counter a slug. She wasn't as quick though, another mugger slashed at her from the side, sending her flying against the wall. Her head took most of the impact.

Groaning, she managed to get up at least to one knee. Her vision blurred, she could only see an outline of a thin figure approaching her, ready to bash her head with a vase. Sable immediately guessed it was the loyal and not so bright brunette. Her hand shot out, and caught the girl's wrist before the piece of pottery connected with her head.

The girl was shaking, and the vase dropped momentarily from her quivering hands, shattering against the floor. She was afraid, and

Sable immediately took that to her advantage "I thought I told you to beat it, sister" she said, as she flipped the girl over her shoulder, causing the brunette to land unconscious on her back.

Her vision now clear, Sable was able to see the three muggers approaching her. She waited for the precise second for them to jump her. And when they did, it was but a second for her to leap out of the way, but three seconds for them to realize what was happening. Their heads connecting with the brute impact of head knocking against head, the three thugs lay unconscious in an awkward pile.

"Score one for the masked chica!" she cheered at her momentary victory. But that was all it was; a momentary victory. The remaining bruisers approached, each of them armed with some sort of weapon. One had a gun, the other a broken pipe, another broken broomstick and the last had a chain. All at once, they advanced toward her, closing in around her like a lion pride around prey; ready to pounce at any time.

She hoped to do the same with the approaching crowd as she did with the last. Unfortunately, this group was a little brighter. A little.

She hopped out of the way of a swinging pipe, and landed on his shoulder, digging her heels into his shoulderblades. The pain caused him to drop his weapon, and allowed her to leap off his shoulder, and swing her arm around his neck in a sleeper hold. Then, at the last possible moment, she tripped him. Once he was on the ground, Sable seized hold of his former weapon and knocked him.

She also used to pipe to block the chainbearer. It coiled around the pipe's like a snake, allowing her to tug at it's owner, sending him flying. Then suddenly, it tore through the air, and bore a hole in the carpeted floor. Gasping, Sable realized it was a gunshot. Whirling, she still saw the smoke curling from the pistol's front sight. She swallowed nervously.

"Well?"

"Nothing so far, Bruce"

The night was still young when Terry had ventured out from the batcave. He was suppose to find this masked woman, and question her. Unfortunately, there wasn't the slightest clue where she would strike next, so Bruce advised Terry to keep a sharp eye out for clues. So far, nothing.

He was muttering about not being able to even spend a Saturday out with some friends, though he perfectly knew he enjoyed being Batman one hundred times better then going to some arcade, it was the principle of the thing. He was still murmuring about it on his night patrol, as he glided around on artificial wings when he heard it.

A shot. A gunshot.

It tore through the air, ripped the memory of mankind and pierced the soul. Terry immediately guessed the direction in which it came from. Gotham's old warehouse; a torn down old place, ratfilled and stench

absorbed area was just the ideal living quarters for a criminal.
>
 "Nevermind..." he murmured, taking off in that direction.

She stood. Frozen. The thug's features turned to that of grim amusement, as he massaged the pistol with his fingers.

Then, he pulled the trigger. Miraculously, she avoided the shot, then the second, then the third. She was become a lot more predictable with her movements, and had to flip back and forth at random, while keeping the ratio of his shots. Suddenly, she saw her chance.

"It's the end of the line missy" the thug commented, aiming straight for her neck.

"Somehow" she retorted coolly. "I don't think so..." Then, she leaped avoiding the bullet by an inch. Grabbing a hold of the low light-like chandelier, she swung, knocking the gun out of his hand with a swift kick. Unfortunately, with gunfree hands, he was able to grab a hold of her ankles and flip her onto back, allowing her to land painfully. She moaned at surge of pain working through her body.

"Say nighty night..." the thug said unpleasantly, balling both hands up into one enormous fist. Shaking her head to clear her mind, she produced one last counter: a strong boot to the groin. He doubled over with the pain, giving her the advantage to put him in an ankle lock and flip him over.

"'nite" she smirked as she stepped over his unconscious body. She whirled to face Hudson, her expression that of triumph and pride.

"No..." James said fearfully... "What do you want?"

"I'm holding you responsible for the killing of Judge Seaver..."

"What?" The crook cocked an eyebrow. "Look lady, I may be a suspect but I swear to God I didn't do it.. honest" He took a few hasty steps back, to which Sable easily countered by advancing forward. He pressed his back to the wall, sweat trickling down his brow and he drew in a shaky breath. She only smiled evilly.

"They're all honest when they're brought to justice" Sable said shaking her head. She seized him by the collar "Unfortunately for you, my quivering friend, this lady of justice doesn't find proof in mere talk"

"Look darlin'" the crook said, raising his hands in defeat " can't we just discuss this over a steaming cup of cocoa or something---Ouch!" She slapped him.

"Don't think so..." she snarled. "We're doing justice _my_ way..."

"You don't have any proof..." Hudson gasped, realizing her intentions. "You'll be killing an innocent man"

"Innocent?" She laugh aloud. "You've got a record with the police a mile long and you say you're innocent? Your death won't matter..."-she lowered her voice to a sharp edged whisper, and drew him closer so he could feel the blade in her tone-" it'll just be one criminal less..."

She was a dangerous young woman, and just by looking at her, Hudson roughly estimated her to be about 18 or 19. Obviously she must have had some tie in with a criminal in the past, why else would she be so keen on avenging some old Judge's death. Perhaps, perhaps, she was one of those tattered souls, watching the news everyday, hearing all the wrong in this world, and longing to avenge it. Those feelings just boiling, and boiling until her outer shell can't hold in all the pressure. She snaps, like a twig; as easily as one, those feelings of hatred pouring out like Niagara falls...

Hudson shook his head. He walked everyday with death at his elbow; being part of a criminal world had it's dangers, but he never pictured her as the face of death. Those glowing slits for eyes, those blood red lips reflecting against a pale face... He was letting his imagination run wild. She was no vampire, or monster for all he feared. She was just a human being, no different from him, and all he had to show her was how he could put his foot down. Suddenly, he grinned, knowing that he could dominate over her tenfold.

Hudson was a man of burly size, unfortunately, he really didn't believe in his own strength until this very minute. Grinning evilly at the frail body that dared approach him, his eyes received their glint for advantage.

Sable had the sudden wave of realization wash over. Hudson's overconceited smirk gave her something to worry about. Before she could even figure out what to do, the burly man had pushed away from the wall, yanked her hand loose off of his neck and flung her against the opposing wall. "UHhhhh" She landed with a thud, sliding down to the floor.

Rubbing her aching head, she failed to see James loom over her. He seized her wrists into a double fist, and knocked his head against her's. She flung backwards, and he let go, allowing her body to take the brute of impact.

Sable gasped, as he grabbed a hold of the discarded pipe; chain still coiled around it. "So not so tough, are ya, sweetheart?" he brought the pipe down where she had been a split second ago. She nimbly avoided it.

"Only when you play fair, cupcake" she sneered, risking a kick at him.

"Raagh!" he whipped the pipe in her general direction, hoping to slash at her from the side. She managed to avoid it a couple of times, but he was quicker, and used the metal rod to trip her. She was his now...

A sudden blur of black slugged him, however, and he fell backwards, dropping the pole, as his body skidded back to the opposing wall. "Peek-a- boo" Batman said, disgruntled at the unconscious thug. That must have been some punch he threw, Hudson's body had imprinted a dent against the wall where the burly body made contact with matter.

However, the dent was nothing compared to what this place was:

Over-turned sofas and armchairs, shattered potted plants, and sprawled bodies. Yes, this place did live up to it's ware house description. The masked woman sure did know how to put up one helluva fight.

"You okay?" he asked the girl finally, offering a gloved hand.

"I've been better...." she accepted his help to pull her up. She dusted herself off.

"Costume party?" he asked her.

"From the looks of it" she said with a shrug. "What are you suppose to be?"

Terry looked a little startled. She didn't know? Terry didn't know if it was his pride talking or if it was the obvious... it wasn't that hard to guess. If the big red bat symbol on his chest didn't give it away, he didn't know where this girl had been hiding. He looked at her strangely.

"Wait a sec... let me guess" she looked at him closely. "Pointy ears, dressed in black... big red bat thingie... I get it.. you're...you're... Batman?" she burst out laughing at the last statement. However, seeing his discomfort, she covered her mouth to catch any giggles that would have escaped.

"What's so funny?" He asked her sternly.

"I...I thought you'd be..."-she paused to look at him from head to toe- "Older.... Taller....er...buffer... I don't know, you just don't seem...real"

"Alright then... you wouldn't mind telling me who you're suppose to be"

"I'm not out for publicity, Batboy...." she leaned back against a emptied bookcase. "If you'd really like though... you can call me Sable"

A silence dripped into between the lack of conversation. Neither said anything, they could only stand there, looking off into completely different directions. What seemed like hours was but a mere minute. The crashing of a lamp to the floor made both jump.

"It's Hudson!" Sable gasped, already breaking into a run "He's getting away!!"

"Talk about quick recovery" Batman frowned, starting on after her.

Suddenly forgetting their awkward acquaintance, the two of them sped foreward bursting through the doors of the warehouse, and outside into the crisp city air and welcoming night's shadows. Probing their sight through almost complete darkness, they waited for some sort of clue to send them in the right direction.

The thudding of footsteps decided for them. "There" Batman pointed to the faint silhouette plunging forward, deeper into the shadows. Getting a look of approval from Sable, both rushed in the escaping criminals general direction, only to be met by complete solitary.

The ally was empty.

"We'll catch up" Batman said looking around. "Sooner or later"

"I almost had him..."

He turned to the harsh whisper from his companion. She was shaking, teeth clenched -grinding into one another- and fists balled up; her whole attitude spoke of vengeance. Realization washed over Batman...

"You were going to kill him?"

She looked up at his surprised features, and permitted herself a cold smile. "Why do you look so surprised?"

"That's murder..." He stepped closer to her, unfolding his arms to just glare at her. "You wouldn;t---"

"Of course I would. Why let another criminal let loose in the city... destroying property, wrecking lives...You of all people should know."

"Maybe I would" Terry turned away, baring a fist and shutting his eyes tightly, trying to push painful memories aside. His father was murdered, and he could have had the man who killed him. His conscience told him otherwise and he spared his life. But there were times that made Terry wish he didn't.... wish that he would bring the same pain to his father's murderer as he possibly could. Perhaps Sable's conscience was totally blocked out, maybe she was just led by vengeance. "but Hudson has done you no wrong...."

"You'd be surprised..."

Hudson was a child tormentor. He thrived on the abuse of children... gave them drugs, hit them, tortured them...until they couldn't take anymore. He killed them. Just like he killed my little brother.

I found my brother at our doorstep one morning, an eight year old severely bruised and almost beaten to death. He had been missing for the past few days, and my parents were away at the police station, here and there, trying to locate where he was. I was home alone when this happened, and he told me all the horrors Hudson had brought him. He somehow managed to get away.

The thing was, Hudson tracked him to our home and wanted to take him away... and kill him before he became a witness. I still remember it vaguely. Three men in masks burst through the door; knocking it down. I was about to call the police, but they cut the line and tookmy brother away. I didn't see,and they were about to kill me too. Somehow, however, my life was spared. I was found unconscious on the

floor next morning as my parents had told me.

Hudson was caught and brought to court, and even with me as a witness, the judge still proclaimed Hudson innocent and let him go. However, Judge Seaver thought otherwise and asked for another court session to finally decide whether Hudson was innocent or not. Unfortunately, the night before that was to happen, he was murdered.

Judge Seaver was..my...a dear friend.

"And so you see..." she concluded, leaning wearily against the ally wall. "I have my reasons for wanting him dead"

"Yeah, but you know you don't need a mask to bring him to justice...." Terry began

"I could say the same to you. Obviously you have had some hurt done to you that made you wear that mask and want good for all people" she turned away "Unfortunately, you aren't doing such a great job"

"You're blaming me?"

"No." She stood up proudly, eyeing him with a cool eye. " It's time Gotham faces a new justice system."

"What are you saying?"

"You put a crook in the slammer for some time, either he gets away or once he's released back onto the streets of Gotham, he commits the same crime, and then it's the same thing, over and over. It's time to put a stop to this" she paused to curl her lip ".... permanently"

Terry drew in a shaky breath. She did have point. Why let lunatics just run loose in Gotham when you could stop them for good... then criminals like Fixx wouldn't run loose on the streets, no Blight, no Inque, No Freeze, nothing. Peace. Maybe, just maybe if something like that did exist, perhaps his father would still be alive.

He shook his head. No. Life was not like that.... and even if man deserved to be punished, he didn't deserve to die for his deeds. Death was the ultimate penalty, and Terry's honor prohibited him from killing. Obviously, Sable didn't believe in honor. All she believed in was revenge, trying to drown her sorrow in blood.

"What if his blood doesn't drown your anger? Will you keep killing until it does?" he shook his head. "It's a drug... it'll keep you wanting more. You won't be the hero, you'll be the murderer"

"Maybe" she said smoothly. "Maybe I'll give Gotham's justice one more chance." she turned to leave. "But when we find Hudson.... no promises"

"Hey Terry!" Max Gibbson waved at him, as he made his way through the

bustling lunch crowd. "Over here"

Being able to spot his pink-haired friend from a mile away, Terry only grinned at her, and swam through the crowd of impatient and hungry teenagers. He brought his lunchtray on the table with a thump.

"Hey, Max... Blade..." he greeted his friends. He looked around again and spotted a rather timid girl looking miserable sitting by Max. She played with her spaghetti with a plastic fork. "Taylor" Terry greeted the girl with a nodd.

"Hi..." she mumbled.

Taylor was a tall girl, tall enough to look Terry straight in the eye with piercing emerald pools, reflecting softly against her lightly tanned skin. Her hair was niether brown nor was it red, it just seemed to be a whole mix of colors, toppling softly barely over her shoulder. Terry had known Taylor to be a quiet girl, who sat infront of him in History class and beside him in English. She really never talked to him, and rarely even said a word to anybody, yet she was part of Blade's little clique and a close friend of Max's.

"So anyway, Max... as I was saying" Blade continued in her purring voice. "Steven Denallio is gone too"

"Really?" the darkskinned girl frowned. "That's really sad... he was quite a cutie" she took a sip of her coke

"Gone?" Terry raised an eyebrow.

"Yeah, gone..." the blonde shrugged. "Didn't you hear, like a quartre of the school has gone missing since last Friday, it's really weird"

"Missing?" He echoed.

"Yeah... Missing" Blade shook her head. "You're sooo out of it McGinnis, where have you been? In a tunnel?"

"Uhh... You could say that" he grinned at her sheepishly. Max kicked him under the table. It was true, Terry's whole teenage life might as well be locked away in a cave somewhere, he spent most of his time as the Batman then being Terry McGinnis. Even though being Batman had it's advantages, it took Terry away from being himself and away from his teenage life and affairs.

"I'm really wondering what happened to them. The fuzz is stalking the school and even questioning the principal" Blade smirked. "Total chaos"

"Maybe they were kidnapped by some madman" came a low murmmmer. The three of them turned to Taylor.

"Oh c'mon girl, you've been in a snare all day" Max chided. "You ought to cheer up. Mopping around won't bring your father back"

Judge Seaver was Taylor's father, Terry recalled eyeing the girl, why wouldn't she be in a snare?

"Ah, leave her alone" Terry leaned closer to her. "It's okay, Taylor. I know how you feel, I've been there"

"It's really awful" Taylor sighed, dabbing her damp eyes with a tissue. "I haven't slept since his funeral. It's a good thing my uncle is cool about me staying over at his place"

"She didn't have anyone except her dad" Max whispered to Terry. "She's taking it really hard, she's afraid she might land in a foster home"

"Awww...Taylor, don't get soft" Blade said, taking the damp tissue away from her friend, to dry her eyes. "C'mon"- she rose- "I'll take you to the girl's room and get you cleaned up"

Nodding with a sniffle, Taylor got up, and followed Blade out of the lunch room, leaving Max and Terry behind.

"Poor girl" Max shook her head.

"Yeah" Terry sighed, remembering how hard he took his father's death. "Anyways, just for the record, who else is missing?"

"McGinnis" she laughed, placing a hand on his shoulder. "You really are soooo out of it"

"You're actually going?" Bruce raised an eyebrow as Terry donned the batsuit once more.

"Yeah" the teen nodded, grabbing hold of the silver utility belt and winding it around his waist. "We're gonna crack this case"

"We're?" Bruce shook his head. "You're very trusting on such a short acquaintance, McGinnis. You can't have a soft spot for every pretty girl who decides to play hero once in a while."

"Look, I'm sure Sable is on our side..." he paused. "She just sees things differently"

"Seeing things differently always brings to conflict" Bruce tugged at a smile. The phone broke through the conversation before Terry could retort. Bruce answered it. "Wayne here"

Terry sighed explosively. He didn't like waiting for approval from Mr Wayne before he did something. He hoped that one day Mr. Wayne would realize that Terry did have good judge of character. But then again, Wayne was the one with more experience, and just looking around the batcave, that word echoed through your mind.

"Who was that?" Terry asked once Bruce put down the phone.

"Tim, he says he'll be out of town for the week" the elder frowned. "You're lucky, I was about to send him with you, I guess that's out of the question now."

Terry only smiled. Knowing Wayne, this was his approval for letting him take this one alone. Pulling on the mask over his head, he waved

a salute to his mentor before jumping into the seat of the batmobile.

"I thought I might find you here"

Terry looked up. The voice was the familiar, smooth tone of his masked companion; a tone slurred together with pride and with sass. Sure enough, there was Sable; her cape catching the crisp, night breeze while the wind played with her auburn mane, her expression grim.

"You heard, huh?"

"About the missing kids, yeah. "she sucked in her breath. "What did I tell ya... James Hudson is guilty as charged"

"Are you sure it's Hudson.." Batman pressed.

"Pretty sure." Sable paused to look at him, and shook her head. "Don't even think about handing the job over to the fuzz. They're about as helpless as flies in a tornado"

The statement stung Batman a little. It wasn't that he was about to hand over the whole case to the police, but he did consider it.

"Well now that we have our work cut out for us.... Where do we start?"

That was the problem. Hudson and his goons could have set up shop anywhere in Gotham, and both of them knew that it wasn't the warehouse anymore. Villains never went back to an old hideout, never. It was as if it was written down somewhere in a criminal's handbook. The places to look was numerous....but the time to find them in was very short. Just thinking of poor Chelsea and Howard suffering abuse send shivers down his spine.

Sable was suffering the same thoughts. Her eyes probed the city in the distance, wrecking her brain trying to recall anything that might be a clue. However, if it was intuition that caused her to look downwards, she would have smacked herself. Below, she saw a familiar figure strolling down the street, whistling smugly to himself. "L:ook..." she poked her companion. "It's one of Hudson's goons"

"Hmmm...well there's our answer to our question" he gestured her to walk around. "You jump from up front, I'll take it from the back"

"Right" She acknowledged with a nodd.

Atleast she's easy to coooperate with, he thought silently, recalling his partnership with the Stalker. His intelligence was challenged by his instincts rather than actually using his head. For Sable, her instincts were challenged by her thoughts and planning. She was almost an equal to a cat; the way she slip down from the building, and stealthly landed in the ally ahead of the whistling crook. He marveled at her skill.

He himself slid down a drain pipe, and landed swiftly on his feet not a few metres behind. He waited for her move.

The goon's note of music was slit by a muffled cry behind a gloved hand. He struggled to wrench away from her grasp, but Batman held him fast from behind, seizing the crook's wrists backward behind him. Sable's hand shot out to the collar of his shirt. "Where's Hudson?" she demanded through clenched teeth.

"I don't know..." the villan replied casually. "Ahh.." he gasped as the grip on his wrists tightened from behind.

"You know" Batman's hissing voice whipped at his ear. "Where is he?"

"I'm telling you freaks, I dunno...RaagH!" He swallowed. Her gripped climbed from his collar to his neck, threatening to squeeze.

"Are you sure..." the masked woman's voice turned ice-like and jagged. "Because if you don't, you're no use to us.... and I do so enjoy disposing of useless things" The grip tightened for a brief second and then loosened a bit.

"Actually"-moisture broke out on the thug's forehead- "I just remembered... Hudson's got a hideaway down at Gotham Harbour--er--dock three. Honest!"

His pleading eyes pleased Sable, and she smiled wryly at him. "Let's hope so..." her left hand went to her side, pulling out a shiny blade, holding it to his neck. "Because if it isn't... I'll come after you and give you a close shave" she stroked his jagged but small beared with the edge of the knife, grinning at him dangerously. Batman's eyebrows soared.

The crook swallowed nervously. "Or maybe it's Dock four?"

"Make up you're mind punk... or it won't be pretty"

"It's dock four...I swear it..."

"Good..." immediatly the hold at him loosened and he relaxed a bit. However, it wasn't to last.

Sable smiled at him unpleasently. "Oh.... by the way" she balled up her hand into a fist. "Thanks!" her fist connected with his face, and he fell backwards, knocked unconcious. She looked up at Batman and cocked an eyebrow before turning her back to leave. "Let's go..."

"You pulled a blade..." he said unbelieving... "You promised, no killing"

"I wasn't actually going to use the blade" she shrugged him off carelessly. "I just carry it around for security... a girl in Gotham has to protect herself somehow"

Somehow that just wasn't reasurring. Terry scowled for a momment. "You're not going to kill Hudson, are you?"

She stopped in her tracks. "Don't start this again.."-she whirled to face him-. "I told you, I can't promise anything"

"You have a chance at being a hero..."

"I'm not out for publicity..." she looked down at her small pocket knife and sheathed it. "I have a score to settle with Hudson, and I decide whether it's cats game or not"

Knowing that he wouldn't be able to get through to her no more, Terry could only give up her and Hudson's fate to God. Whatever that girl decided, she had Hudson on strings... that made him a dead man. Shaking his head, he let out a long and defeated sigh. "Let's get going..."

The Gotham harbour was one of the older places that needed the futuristic touch. The buildings were old, bricklaid and falling apart. The windows were shattered, the drain pipes greased and smeared with a stinging smell, and the road pavements cracked. This side of the harbour seemed like a perfect hide away for anyone of the night profession; pickpockets, thieves, smugglers and others who were bent on bringing chaos to the city.

Two figures crept through the rising mist that the ocean seemed to bring with the coming of the night. It was dangerously foggy and there was a hint of a storm. The mist curled from under the deck boards, and swirled around the two masked companions, and gave them a faint view of what was up ahead. Sable expressed an explosive sigh.

"We could walk around for hours and not find anything"

"The crook said dock four... none of these docks are labeled" Batman observed, casting a determined glance around the harbour. "Lying, mangy, son of..."

"Relax.... if Hudson's not here, I'm gonna keep my promise and give him a close shave" her hand automatically went to her belt. He took into consideration that this was where she kept her blade, and grimly became wary of it incase she decided to pull it out again.

Setting his jaw on a grim line, he peered through the mistladen air with an exercised eye. He wondered if he should risk talking to Wayne and asking for advice, but seconds later the idea washed away from his mind as if it had never been.

"Batman" her voice turned somewhat gasping. "Look...."

Somewhere down the beachline, he could see a faint outline of a crane, and three figures looming about it. One was rather small and timid, the other two were two big bulks of muscle, hauling the fragile figure to the tip of the platform. Batman immediatly guessed that the smaller figure had to be a child, but it was hard to tell whether girl or boy. He didn't have to look at his companion for acknowledgment, both took to full speed down the dock, thier footsteps pounding against the wooden planks.

"What do you think they're going to do to us" a frightened Cheslea looked over to Howard, who was equally afraid, quivering so much that caused his glasses to bounce up and down from his nose to brow, and his entire plump body jiggled and shook from the sudden nausea that took over.

"I---I don't know..." her plump companion replied, looking fearfully at the two distant outlines that seemed to be the cause of his body quaking.

"This is just sick..." Chelsea shook her head, looking up. "Why would anyone want to torture poor, innocent children.... "

"And us for that matter" Howard put in.

"Simple" a cackling figure approached them. "Your mommies and daddies will pay large amounts of ransom money to get you brats back."

"I say it's a genius plan, James" the familiar brunette smiled crookedly at him, cuddling closer. Walking her fingers up his arm, she then added playfully. "When all the ransom money comes in, you'll be able to afford me a real diamond, right pumpkin?"

"Right" Hudson looked down at the girl with an evil grin.

The girl gave out a shriek of happiness and danced around him happily a few times before clinging back onto him. "Isn't he the best?" She nuzzled closer to him.

"Oh right..." Chelsea looked over at Howard, her eyes dripping sarcasm. "Sure, he's the best"

As the two masked figures neared the site, four more figures became more visible as the fogged parted away from their vision. Both Batman and Sable stopped in their tracks to look at one another.

"Party poopers" she said dryly.

The overshadowed figures must have heard her comment, for they were slowly nearing them, only two of them bearing a weapon of some sort. Grinning somewhat slyly, the agile female ducked underneath the deck by flipping over the side. Batman followed the same step, except on the opposing side.

The thugs approached the area where the two had once been, and drew whatever weapons they had, their eyes examining the docks automatically. Unfortunately, they had forgotten to look below deck. On third count, the two masked figures flipped from underneath, and knocked all four thugs out cold. They grinned at one another in approval, before looking yonder towards the enormous crane.

They took to running again, this time not stopping for anything....

"Let us go!" Chelsea pleaded, tears welling up in her eyes as she

wailed loudly. "PLEASE!"

"In good time, dearie..." James couldn't help but mock. "Once the money arrives, you can go home..." - he then gestured further into the shadows. Vaguely, Chelsea could make out small figures... fragile frames of younger children; tear stained faces and wide, innocent eyes..."you can all go home..." he said grinning wickedly.

She gasped. It was an awful sight to see, and she drew back against the body of metal that was the crane, but there was little that she could do when her hands and feet were tied up. Howard look just about as miserable- and ready to cry- like the children.

"And if our parents refuse to pay...?"

"Then I have no use for you" he then pointed to the small girl, estimated to be around eight, being tied to the top of the pole while she wailed uncontrollably. "and I always find a way to get rid of useless things" An evil smile tugged his mouth into a smile, followed by a horrible laughing deep within his throat. Lightning crashed and thunder roared in the background, just adding to the horrific atmosphere Hudson had created.

"It's a pity you're not tied to that pole" A familiar voice choked off his laughing. Hudson whirled to find to mask clad figures; one was a woman, the other who was speaking was Batman.

"I was hoping you two would show up" Hudson showed fake relief. "What's a freakshow without the freaks... Boys"

On command, a dozen figures, all bulky and bearing a weapon of some sort, appeared from beyond the shadows. This was more than even odds for the duo.

"Now this is a party!" Sable said cocking an eyebrow over a sardonic eye. She permitted herself a chuckle. "C'mon boys... let's dance"

She coaxed them over with a gloved hand, daring them to bring on their best. Two crooks approached her. The first she led over to the cliff's edge, and tripped him, knocking him over her shoulder and over the cliff into the icy waters below. The other she tried throwing punches at. This thug was a massive mammoth, he gripped her fist into enormous grasps and grinned stupidly at her.

She returned the favour by bringing her knee up to his chin, throwing his head back. Taken by surprise, the crook's hold on her loosened, and she managed to wrench away from him, and hit him where it hurt. Once he was on the ground, she looked over at her companion pounding three thugs at once.

Batman was an excellent fighter, and she had admired him... greatly. Their meeting was a little awkward, and truthfully she didn't recognize her rolemodel for her suit at first. She didn't mean to laugh at him; there was nothing to laugh about. She wanted to take his words into consideration, suddenly, and forget about what she intended to do with Hudson. She wanted to kill him... kill him for all that he had ever done to her. But that was not the way, she also wanted to be remembered as a hero... something her deceased parents and brother would be proud of.

But those thoughts were washed away immediately, when she had spied her prey trying to make a quick exit. All those feelings of anger and lust for revenge seeped back into her mind, and overpowered her judgement. She threw back her attacker, and reached for her blade.

James, seeing Sable approaching him, looked down into the bluff. Seeing it was either that or death, he chose the first, and slid down the slope to the beach below. Sable followed close behind, her boots almost causing her to trip before landing softly on the sand.

"Well..." he said whirling around to face her, seeing that there was no where to run but into the ocean... the bluff curved crescent, its walls blocking off both sides, enclosing around them dangerously. "I must say, you never give up...."

He drew back a few steps, away from those narrow slits that were her eyes and away from the glint of the pocket knife blade.

"Murderer...." she whispered, approaching him.

"Heh..." Hudsons fiddled nervously with his hands. "Like you should talk... how many criminals to you put out before you got to me?"

"Shut up!" she snarled. "I'd kill a hundred if it meant killing you"

"Hey, that's okay" the villain put up his hands in defeat. "I can live with that"

"Your time is now!" She rounded on him, baring the knife forward, before rushing in, ready to stab him. "Raaagh!"

He avoided the knife a couple of times, and as she drew nearer, he somehow managed to grab a hold of her wrist and flip her to her back, causing the dagger to clatter noisily against the gravel.

"Okay now missy" the criminal growled, pinning her wrists to the ground. "Let's see who you really are"

Grabbing a hold of the shiny, black mask, James pulled it off with a tug. Auburn strands of hair toppled over her face revealing piercing emerald eyes, the same once that pierced his heart not a month ago. "YOU?!" his voice cracked into a whisper.

Taylor was breathing hard now, unmasked brought her into further fury. Taking his initial surprise to advantage, she flipped him over, and stumbled over closer to her discarded blade and approached him again. He tried to get up, but she kicked him down, bringing the dagger closer to his neck. Hudson swallowed.

"Well...what are you waiting for... do it!"

Her uneasy breathing told him a lot about her character. Why was she hesitating, she wondered, when she had the chance to avenge her father and brother's death? Why...

"You've won..." he continued to coax her, impatiently awaiting her

to go through with it.

She didn't do anything, her knees pinned down his elbows, and she held the blade close to his throat.

"C'mon Taylor..." his patience wearing thin. "You've waited for this for a long time. Give into your vengeance!"

"You've killed so many children.... so many people... my father and brother.... I shouldn't let you live" her voice still whispering harshly, almost embending into him. He sucked in his breath.

She shouldn't let him live. Why should she? She was nothing now...and it was only a matter of time before she took to a foster home, and left everything she ever loved behind. All because of him... the man's throat she held her knife to. Do it...her vengeful heart cried out, do it... do it.... DO IT!

Something else drew her back. Whether it was her conscience or the memory of Batman's words seeping into her judgement.

"What if his blood doesn't drown your anger? ...Anger... the word echoed through her head. Will you keep killing until it does? ...Does it's a drug... it'll keep you wanting more....more You won't be the hero, you'll be the murderer".. murderer... the word returned to her like a haunting.

Setting her jaw on a grim line, she was about to decide, raising the knife on an angle, ready to strike. It seemed like they remained like that forever, when a scream shredded the silence like an axe craving the head of a victim. Sable look up, and her heart screamed.

"No!"

The small girl, who was bound the end of the crane pole by ropes, was slipping. The rope was cracking, unable to hold her weight no longer. Looking down at James with a deadly look.

"Descisions, descisions..." he mocked.

She glared at him, then back up at the child. The blade swiped down and connected, sinking inches into the sand no more than an inch away from his head. He sighed in relief, and in a flash, she was gone.

Batman, seeing the little girl shrilly cry out as the rope snap taut, he gasped. When the rope broke, there was no one there to catch the child's fall, save for the jagged rocks below and the untrusting ocean. "No!" he yelled, trying to break free of the barrier two thugs made, trying to keep him from rushing to the child's rescue.

The rope snapped, and the child tumbled from the sky with a piercing screech. However, a flash of black and red cape whisked the air, and in midflip, Sable had caught the small child and flipped forward, landing safely on her feet.

An unmasked Sable smiled down at the sobbing girl. "You alright?" she

asked.

The child sniffed. "I was scared" she gasped and buried her face into Taylor's shoulder. The young woman only smiled.

Sighing in relief, Terry continued to pound the last two thugs when the sound of sirens broke the scene. Disposing of the final crook with a well placed punch to the gut, Batman subsided to the shadows.

"I'll let the fuzz take care of the trash" he said, nearing his companion. She said nothing, and slid down the slope to the beach once more, finding no one. Her blade remained where she had stuck it, and her mask lay not a few inches away from it. She picked up both.

"He's gone" she said soberly, looking around, her shoulders dropping. "Again"

"The Police will catch up to him this time...and to Arkham he will go, not even a trial"

The words still didn't seem to satisfy her. She continued to scan the area with a teary eye. She failed her vengeance. "I failed"

"No" Batman shook his head, placing a gloved hand upon her shoulder. "You did the right thing. You chose to save a life, rather than end one." she turned around to look at him and he smiled warmly at her "I'm sure Judge Seaver...your father, would be proud. You're a hero now, Taylor..."

"Yeah" she said silently, looking up at the sky as the fog departed revealing a silver moon. "I guess I am..."

The End

End
file.